



Beer Cat Scratchings

TWO

Being a Purr-zine from Al & Al, with still no help at all from Ruddles and Tanglefoot

Helicon 93 - the convention that wouldn't die

Most con reports tell it like it is. But not in this case¹. Just when I thought it was safe, and could sit back for a month before doing a second *Scratchings*, there was a phone call from Bridget Wilkinson², asking if we could put up a Ukrainian “for a day or two”. Being the hospitable kind, and also possessing a spare room³, we naturally concurred. The “I’m still in Jersey” comment was just to round things off, I’m sure...

A day or so later, I got a phone call⁴ from Boris⁵, who was trying to find the flat. From the sound of the directions, I thought I knew where he was, and so decided to come to him instead of giving directions, as it would be easier... What made me think that it would be easier, apart from blind optimism, and also the realisation that giving directions to someone who is not totally sure where they currently are is a bit tricky⁶. After a few minutes failing to find Boris, or anyone with a large suitcase and a leather jacket, for that matter, I started looking further afield for telephone boxes; still no sign. I retraced my steps, zig-zagged up and down all the local streets, trying to find any other phone boxes that weren't there the first time round⁷. At his point, I remembered Boris saying something like “I remember

¹OK, I'll come clean. This bit looks just like the start of the last issue, mainly because it is the start of the last issue...

²Doc Weir award winner and Eurocon chair... Oh *that* Bridget!

³Or, given the number of people we have put up as a result of conventions, is it just that we have “Mug” tattooed on our foreheads?

⁴This seems a bit repetitive... “Yesterday I had a premonition that today I would have déjà vu” *George Carlin*

⁵Boris Sidyuk — co-editor of *Chernobylization*, literary consultant and leading light in Ukrainian fandom

⁶“Head towards the pub” “The what?” “Er... head away from the Tube station” “What station?” You get the picture.

⁷I'm sure something like that happened in an episode of *Starsky and Hutch*, but I could be wrong...

passing Leo's”: this could have been a problem, as the nearest Leo's was a couple of miles away. Or did he say “Londis”? I assumed the latter, and did yet more ever increasing circles in search of a phone box. It was at this time that I realised that there an awful lot of phone boxes near us... One of my wanderings took me back past the flat, where Boris was waiting “Just after I phoned, I asked someone for directions...”

The “day or two” spread into a week, partly because Air Ukraine⁸ were pretty hard to find... Still, we thoroughly enjoyed the *Gaidamatska* Ukrainian vodka⁹¹⁰.

Lewes — a localised black hole

Comments from Allison about the first issue were mainly along the lines of “aren't there a bit too many in-jokes?” I don't know. Are there? However, I will endeavour to explain the heading¹¹¹². Hitch¹³, doing his Machiavellian bit, had persuaded Allison to sing at the Medieval Arts and Sciences Fair, down in Lewes. The event itself was very interesting, with various people demonstrating their crafts, and various other people finding out that various things, like, for example, spinning wool wasn't as easy as it looked... The meal itself was good, and even the after dinner singing was good. Who knows, we may even turn up at the Midsummer Revel...

However, the tricky part came when we attempted to leave. We followed a sign **All Routes**. And followed. And

⁸or whatever they're called...

⁹It's the first time that I have seen vodka in a 500ml beer type bottle with a crown top — resealing is for wimps...

¹⁰Although Boris was less keen on the *Vladivar* brought by David Hodges — this had been brought for novelty value only, as it comes from that famous East European city of Glasgow...

¹¹if only to fill up more of the page...

¹²If I'm really stuck for stuff to say, I might even explain why *Beer Cat Scratchings* ... Nah!

¹³Look, these factual footnotes are getting boring. If you don't already know Hitch, then ask someone who does...

followed. The lights of Lewes were now quite far behind "I don't think we're in Kansas any more", said Allison¹⁴. Sure enough, we arrived in Newhaven, looking for the coast road to Brighton. Road signs in that part of Sussex seem to be reminiscent of the Second World War¹⁵, and so we saw a sign for Brighton just after we'd passed the junction. Having found the junction, we then needed to find somewhere to turn round...

This accomplished, we set off in the direction signposted. This was a mistake. The road we followed took us back towards Lewes, and dropped us off just at the event horizon again. Without a bit of skill, luck and a following wind, we avoided going back into Lewes, and successfully found the (non-coast) Brighton road. We then discovered that Brighton also has an event horizon, at least where finding the by-pass is concerned¹⁶. Just when we were beginning to think it was our navigation at fault¹⁷, we crossed over into Surrey. Here be roadsigns¹⁸.

Odds and Endings

This month's piece of the totally bizarre: Programming Basic for Eternal Life – PBFEL¹⁹. It is difficult to know how to

¹⁴Actually, it was more like "I think we're on the back road to Newhaven"

¹⁵Either missng, hidden, inaccurate or all three. (although I'm not sure how you check a sign for accuracy if it's hidden...)

¹⁶Road atlases are not helpful here – the by-pass is not finished, even though its path has been known about for the last couple of years, so even the most up to date atlas won't show just how much has been completed.

¹⁷Not that likely, he said modestly.

¹⁸It turned out that we weren't the only ones to find escaping from the Lewes event horizon – Hitch said that he too had had problems...

¹⁹Despite it being sent to a computer branch, it is nothing to do with BASIC (the language), and nothing to do with Programming (at least not of computers). The full story of how I came to have a copy is long and involved, and may require many pints of beer for the telling (hint, hint).

This has been the second edition of *Beer Cat Scratchings*, produced by Alasdair Hepburn and proof read by Allison Ewing. The Beer Cats were played by themselves, and Arnie did the printing. LoCs and other stuff can be sent to us at 123c Chobham Rd, Stratford, London, E15 1LX. ©1993 for all the original bits...which of course excludes the logos, which were drawn by Igor Gasowski and are ©1991 Berkeley systems Inc.

describe this, apart from quoting bits of it at random. In fact, at work, this is what several people did²⁰. Just to clarify things, I am not being scathing about it, as the author has clearly put a lot of work into it²¹. I just find it totally bizarre...

Honest happy people do not facially age so quick, perhaps this ageing process will stop...

If you want to see some unhappy faces go out shopping on Christmas Eve and see how the whole event has pulled people down, you must not forget a present or card or you will lose a friend...

Conscience is a fear of going against a fixed fundamental perceived or otherwise truth program

The problem is that for every sentence that makes a lot of sense, there are several others which make the author a candidate for ridicule. However, the text is public domain, and anyone who wants to read the whole thing can have a copy...

On a lighter note... at Helicon, John Ewing (no relation) was busy compiling the important list of *Dos and Don'ts*²² when dealing with Glasgow fen, such as "Don't share a room with Cuddles and Ralph", or "Don't ask 'What part of England are you from?'". Track him down for the full list...



²⁰The original ran to over 70 pages, excluding the mailing list (famous organisations like "Greenpeace" and the Labour Party at "Worlworth Road" (sic).

²¹Although not where spelling is concerned. All quotes are verbatim, warts and all

²²I know it looks funny, but I don't understand why people want to put apostrophes in when describing words in the plural. To console Dave Langford and his "apostrophe watch", I do know when to use them, most of the time; I was at a school where you were crucified for putting the apostrophe in the wrong place. and that was just the name of the school! Alastair Wheeler-Reid, when he's not slaughtering vegetables, will confirm this.